

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 08423 020458Z

ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05

CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 FPC-01 H-01

INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05

USIA-06 OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 STR-05 TRSE-00 ACDA-12

PA-01 PRS-01 /135 W

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1895

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 8423

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, AS, EMIN

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS : URANIUM

1. SUMMARY: FOR AN ISSUE WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ONE OF THE BIGGEST IN THE CURRENT NATIONAL ELECTIONS, URANIUM AND NUCLEAR ENERGY GENERALLY HAVE COME PRETTY CLOSE TO FIZZLING. CURRENT POLLS INDICATE THAT ONLY APPROXIMATELY FIVE PERCENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN ELECTORATE BELIEVES URANIUM RANKS NO. 1 IN THE ORDER OF THEIR PRIORITIES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY CONTINUES TO MUSTER WHAT ENTHUSIASM IT CAN FOR ITS STATED PLATFORM CALLING FOR A MORATORIUM ON DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIA'S URANIUM RESOURCES UNTIL "ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS" HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED. WHILE THE ANTI-URANIUM DEMONSTRATION CORPS CONTINUES TO
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PAGE 02 CANBER 08423 020458Z

APPEAR AT POLITICAL RALLIES, AND A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF ALP BUMPER STICKERS PROCLAIM ITS ANTI-URANIUM THEME, FEW POLITICIANS OTHER THAN THE ALP'S DEPUTY OPPOSITION LEADER TOM UREN, AND M FRASER, HAVE CHOSEN TO MKAE MUCH OF IT. UREN'S POSITION IS SUFFICIENTLY WELL-KNOWN TO BE A BIT BORING TO ANY OTHER THAN THE HARD-CORE ANTI-URANIUM CLAQUE.

3. FRASER, POSSIBLY SUSPECTING THAT A MAJORITY OF AUSTRALIANS ARE LEASED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE A DECISION (TO PERMIT URANIUM MINING UNDER STRICT SAFEGUARDS), NO MATTER WHAT IT IS, HAS CHOSEN TO EMPHASIZE HIS GOVERNMENT'S DECISIVENESS ON THE MATTER, ALMOST AS A TAUNT.

4. ON THE NATIONALLY TELEVISED ABC PROGRAM "THIS DAY TONIGHT" ON NOVEMBER 29, FRASER GAVE THE CLEAREST EXPOSITION OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION YET. AS A MATTER OF INTEREST TO ADDRESSEES, THIS STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY IS REPEATED BELOW.

5. "I THINK IN RELATION TO URANIUM IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND TWO MATTERS. AUSTRALIA IS A RESOURCE RICH COUNTRY. WE DON'T ONLY HAVE URANIUM -- WE HAVE COAL, WE HAVE IRON ORE, WE HAVE BAUXITE, WE HAVE NICKEL, WE HAVE FARMING LANDS, WE HAVE A GOOD PART OF OUR OWN OIL, A LARGE AMOUNT OF NATURAL GAS. IT IS HARD FOR MANY AUSTRALIANS TO UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS OF COUNTRIES THAT DON'T HAVE THOSE NATURAL RESOURCES -- THAT HAVE TO RELY ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON THE ENERGY AND CAPACITY OF THEIR OWN PEOPLE FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD, FOR THEIR WELL-BEING. IF A RESOURCE RICH COUNTRY SUCH AS AUSTRALIA STARTS TO SAY TO OTHER COUNTRIES, TO BRITAIN FOR EXAMPLE, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 CANBER 08423 020458Z

WE WON'T ALLOW YOU TO BUY FROM US THE ENERGY THAT YOU NEED FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES TO KEEP YOUR FACTORIES OPERATING, TO KEEP YOUR HOMES HEATED IN THE WINTER, THEN WE ARE SAYING SOMETHING VERY SERIOUS INDEED. THAT IN ITSELF IS A MORAL ISSUE OF HIGH CONSEQUENCE. NOW, THE SECOND ISSUE CONCERNS THE QUESTION OF PROLIFERATION. URANIUM IS GOING TO BE USED TO PRODUCE POWER FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES WHETHER AUSTRALIA INVOLVES HERSELF IN THAT TRADE OR NOT. SINCE THAT TRADE IS GOING TO TAKE PLACE, IT IS CERTAINLY IN THE WORLD'S INTEREST, AND CERTAINLY IN AUSTRALIA'S INTEREST, TO HAVE THAT TRADE UNDERTAKEN IN THE SAFEST POSSIBLE WAY, WITH THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE SAFEGUARDS, WITH THE BEST POSSIBLE ANTI-PROLIFERATION REGIME. IF WE PRETEND THE WORLD DOESN'T EXIST, AS THOUGH WE ARE LIVING ON THE MOON, AND IGNORE WHAT IS GOING ON, WE WILL HAVE NO INFLUENCE IN MAKING THIS WORLD A SAFER PLACE. IN THIS PARTICULAR ARENA, IT IS EITHER ONE OR ALL. YOU CAN'T SAY THAT AUSTRALIA WILL BE SAFE BECAUSE AUSTRALIA IS NOT INVOLVED IN THE TRADE, IF THE TRADE IS GOING ON IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD IN A WAY THAT IS NOT SAFE. SO MY GOVERNMENT HAS COME TO THE VIEW THAT IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR AUSTRALIA TO HAVE A VOICE IN WORLD FORUMS, ARGUING

FOR THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE SAFEGUARDS, ARGUING FOR EVEN STRONGER NON-PROLIFERATION REGIMES, MAKING SURE THAT ONE SUPPLIER COUNTRY WILL REINFORCE THE SAFEGUARDS OF THE OTHER. OUR SAFEGUARDS ARE THE STRICTEST IN THE WORLD. WE DO HAVE A POWERFUL VOICE IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS IN ARGUING FOR A SAFER WORLD. THAT IS THE BEST WAY OF DISCHARGING OUR RESPONSIBILITY, NOT ONLY TO AUSTRALIANS WHO ARE HERE NOW BUT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS OF AUSTRALIANS."
ALSTON

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